

HISTORY KEEPERS

2026
Issue 1
FEBRUARY

www.westbywihistory.com
westbywihistory@gmail.com

PO Box 42
Westby, WI 54667
608.634.4478

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

Each new year is a wonderful time to reflect on our past achievements and look ahead. Thanks to your support, the Westby Area Historical Society continues to thrive. Our Board of Directors will remain in their roles, ensuring stability in 2026. Thank you, Carol and Dorothy, for continuing as board members. John, Kathy, and I were reelected as officers, and we thank you for entrusting us with

these positions.

Founded more than thirty-five years ago, the Society preserves the heritage of Westby and the surrounding area. Over the past several years, our organization has grown in capacity and influence throughout the city and county. We document local history and the lives of residents through artifacts, archives, and genealogical collections. A recent large donation we received from Dr. Robert Ibarra is highlighted on Page 3. Each year, we receive valuable donations from those who recognize the importance of preserving the past for future generations. We are grateful to all who entrust us with their treasures.

Our end-of-the-year financial appeal was very successful. However, if you have not yet had an opportunity to contribute, donations can still be made. You can mail a donation to our post office box address, or just click on the "Join/Donate" tab at the top of our website page, then scroll down to the "Donate" button. It's very simple and safe to do.

The Thoreson House Museum will be open on Sundays this summer and by appointment the rest of the year. We welcomed many new and returning visitors in 2025, who appreciated the changes and additions to our collections, and we already have two tour groups scheduled for 2026. For questions, contact us via our website or by telephone.

We are continually expanding our membership and volunteer base, and hope you will attend our monthly meetings. Those dates are listed in the 4-month calendar published on Page 3. Your involvement, whether through membership, volunteering, or donations, is vital to our mission "as an educational organization to collect, preserve, promote, and communicate the history of Westby." Thank you for your continued support. I hope to see you soon at one of our monthly meetings or other events. Yours sincerely, Blaine Hedberg, President of WAHS

Save the Date:
Saturday, July 25
for our largest fundraiser!



2025 ANNUAL MEETING

On Tuesday, December 9, the members and guests of WAHS met for our Annual Meeting. Representatives from state government offices, local government officials, businesspeople, school representatives, and WAHS members attended. President Blaine shared his Annual Report and reviewed some of the WAHS events and activities that highlighted 2025. Our 10th annual *Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies* with Dennis Gage was the best of those highlights! The 2025 financial statement was reviewed with an explanation of the higher-than-usual museum maintenance expenses due to the installation of new gutters. Lawncare costs were also higher because of the new landscape edging and lower-maintenance gardens that were put in. It is important to note that, unlike *Sweet Rides*, "Events – other" are for community outreach and not meant to be fundraisers. If you were unable to attend the meeting and would like a copy of the report, please contact us. We would be happy to mail one to you!

2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

	CHECKING ACCOUNT	
1/1/25	Balance forward	\$ 3,728.54
INCOME	Donations and memorials	\$ 4,737.98
	Event – Sweet Rides	\$21,243.17
	Events – other	\$2,417.90
	Membership dues	\$800.00
	Mirror raffle	\$455.00
	Transfer from Savings	\$7,000.00
	Income Subtotal	\$36,654.05
EXPENSES	Acquisitions for collection	\$1,099.65
	Advertising	\$50.00
	Computer, website	\$596.14
	Collections management	\$658.52
	Electric and water	\$1,289.41
	Event expenses - Sweet Rides	\$12,862.41
	Event expenses – other	\$2,754.31
	Heat	\$857.96
	Insurance	\$1,742.00
	Lawncare	\$5,783.04
	Maintenance of museum	\$7,942.23
	Memberships & conferences	\$173.00
	Office expenses	\$35.00
	Phone and internet	\$739.58
	Post office	\$135.00
	Printing	\$688.18
	Expenses Subtotal	\$37,406.43
11/30/25	Ending Balance	\$2,976.16



Shining a Light on the Past

In honor of Jana and Dave Dregne's 50 years of business in Westby, we thought this little bit of history from the January 27, 1943, *Westby Times* issue might be fun for you to read!

Flugstad Bros. Buy Stevlingson Block

A real estate deal of no small proportion was consummated here the other day when the Stevlingson store building, on the corner of Main and State streets, became the property of Burton and Kermit Flugstad, for several years affiliated with their father, Albert J. Flugstad, in the hardware business. Present owner of the Stevlingson block was Harold J. Stevlingson, who purchased the property from his father, Henry O. Stevlingson, about three years ago. During the past year the front half of the building has been vacant, the rear half being occupied by Harold's grocery stock.

The imposing store building was erected in 1912 by Henry Stevlingson and his partner, Tom Call. Mr. Call sold his interest in the business in 1920, leaving Mr. Stevlingson sole owner of building and stock of merchandise.

To Move Hardware Stock

We understand that in about a month the Flugstad brothers will move their hardware stock into their newly acquired building, leaving their present old quarters vacant. Their new quarters will doubtless be one of the largest and up-to-date hardware stores in the country.

* Editor's Note: Flugstad Hardware, started in 1890, was located at 112 S. Main Street when this move took place!



This photo, taken about 1918, shows South Main Street in Westby. The entrance of Flugstad Hardware was at ● and the entrance to Stevlingson & Call was at ●.

Welcome to our
newest member,
Carol Krogan!

Valentine's Day Appreciation



For the third year, during the week of Valentine's Day, we gave \$5.00 gift cards to 20 people who "reacted" and "commented" on our Facebook post featuring the above photo. It was a great way to give back a little something to our WAHS members and friends. These gift cards are also a very simple way to see how far our Facebook posts reach, how quickly our posts are seen, and if our audience is actually reading the text of the post. Thank you to those who participated – we hope you enjoyed your coffee! Speaking of coffee...

"Kaffegruppe" is meeting monthly!

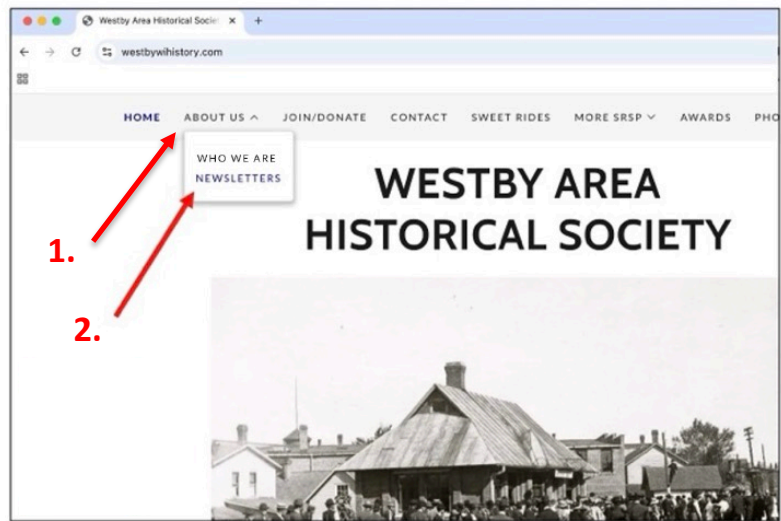
On January 13, we had our first meeting of WAHS members and friends in the Westby area who have expressed an interest in talking with others who can speak Norwegian. We had 14 people at the Thoreson Museum who are fluent, hoped to learn a little of the language, or are somewhere in between. Most who attended spoke the old Gudbrandal dialect. Everyone agreed that the afternoon was fun, productive, and they wanted to continue meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 2:00. We will work out how to proceed in a middle ground area, so that no one is left behind, but no one is bored. WAHS is happy to sponsor this activity because it has a beneficial educational element, supports a sense of community, and celebrates our Norwegian heritage. This group is a "work in progress" and will take suggestions as they find their way, but everyone agreed the treats and coffee were a big hit!



NEWSLETTERS ARE NOW ONLINE!

The most current plus 2 years of newsletter issues are now available on our website for WAHS members and friends. This easy access will allow even our loyal non-member volunteers to see what we are all about and stay up-to-date on our latest activities. From the financials you reviewed on the first page of this newsletter, you can see that postage and printing for newsletters for just our members are over \$800/year. We hope our newsletters on the website will share our mission with more people without increasing our expenses.

When you go to our website at www.westbywihistory.com, at the top of the homepage, click on **ABOUT US**, then click on **NEWSLETTERS**. When you are on the **NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES** page, you can scroll down to see all the issues. If reading the newsletter online works for you and you no longer need a paper copy, contact us by email or leave a phone message at 608-634-4478.



FOR YOUR 2026 CALENDAR

We are going to be busy and hope you can join us for one or more of these events! Please check our Facebook page for any updates.

March 3, Tuesday, 1 pm: Monthly meeting at the Daily Brew

March 10, Tuesday, 2 pm: Kaffegruppe – Norwegian conversations

April 10, Friday, 10 am: Monthly meeting at the Thoreson Museum
(Changed to accommodate the election)

April 14, Tuesday, 2 pm: Kaffegruppe – Norwegian conversations

April 18, Saturday, 10 am: Cemetery Stone Cleaning Workshop at the Country Coon Prairie Cemetery

May 5, Tuesday, 1 pm: Monthly meeting at the Thoreson Museum

May 11-15, Monday-Friday: Syttende Mai school program presentations

May 12, Tuesday, 2 pm: Kaffegruppe – Norwegian conversations

May 13, Wednesday, 7 pm: All-City Band Concert at the WAPAC
“Grandmother of the Year” will be announced at intermission

May 16, Saturday, 9 am-5 pm: Lefse/pølse sales on the corner of State and Main Streets

May 16, Saturday, 10 am-3 pm: Syttende Mai Museum Tours

May 17, Sunday, 9 am until sold out: Lefse/pølse sales on the corner of State and Main Streets

May 17, Sunday, 1:30 pm: “Grandmother of the Year” and “Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies” entries in the Syttende Mai “Big Parade”

June 2, Tuesday, 1 pm: Monthly meeting at the Thoreson Museum

June 9, Tuesday, 2 pm: Kaffegruppe – Norwegian conversations

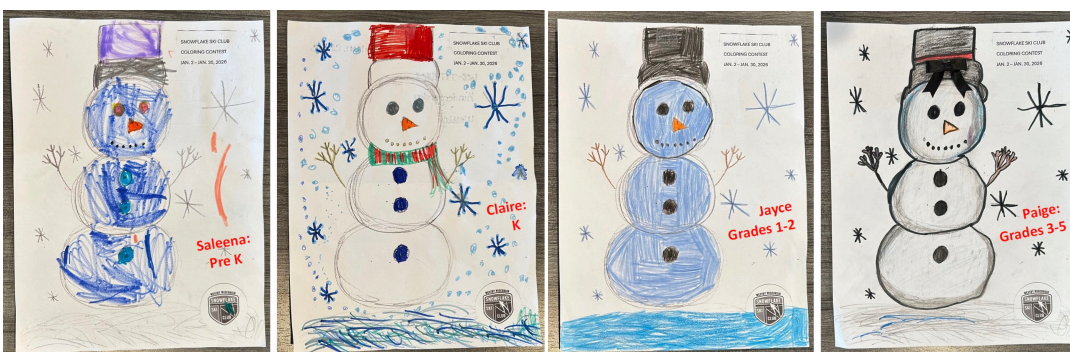
ROB IBERRA DONATION

From 1974 until 1976, Robert Iberra was in Westby, doing research for his PhD dissertation. He transcribed hundreds of oral interviews into 12 volumes and took more than 1,000 slides and photos documenting the Norwegian history and attitudes of residents in the area about immigration and assimilation, Syttende Mai, Christmas traditions, social structure, and so much more. He donated this treasure trove to WAHS, and we are sorting through it, finding some great information about Westby's history. So far, we have identified interviews with more than 80 people in the Westby and Coon Valley area, have converted more than 600 slides to photos, and are just starting on a folder of contact sheets of photos to identify. As time goes on, we will be sharing some of this great stuff on our Facebook posts!



Snowflake Ski Club Coloring Contest Winners

WAHS once again sponsored prize money for the annual Snowflake Coloring Contest. The winners of the 4 categories (Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st & 2nd grade, 3rd — 5th grades) were pretty randomly chosen because the entries were all so cute. 1st place winners are shown to the left.



You will get a separate notice when it is time to renew your membership. Please do not pay before that time.

Dues are just \$20/person and help us continue our mission. *We appreciate your renewal!*

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"History is an argument without end."
Dutch historian Pieter Geyl (1887 – 1966)



Please leave a message at 608-634-4478, email us at westbywihistory@gmail.com, or find us on Facebook. Your ideas, opinions, and suggestions matter!



We want to hear from you!



Thank You!
to our sponsors for their support! It helps our general operations budget, our members, our newsletter, and our events!

FEBRUARY FOTO FEEDBACK

This year, WAHS sponsored a full-page ad in the Snowflake Ski Club Tournament Program and the prize money for the Children's Coloring Contest. (See winners in each age group on Page 3.) In honor of the ski club, can you name the people in this photo?



2026 Officers and Board of Directors

President and Curator – Blaine Hedberg (2027)
Vice President – John Erlandson (2027)
Sec't/Treas & Newsletter – Kathy Anderson (2026)
Board Member – Dorothy Skaaland La Due (2028)
Board Member – Carol Erlandson Navrestad (2028)
Board Member – Marlo Volden (2026)

* Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting

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Helping you build a better life.

Please share our newsletter with your friends, and encourage them to join WAHS by filling out and mailing this membership form!

Westby Area Historical Society

P. O. Box 42; Westby, WI 54667

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Your Annual Dues of \$20.00 supports our education efforts, our quarterly newsletter, and the Thoreson House Museum & Genealogy Center building.

☐ Please mail my newsletter.

☐ I can see the newsletter on the website.

WAHS EIN #39-1645990

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE _____
PHONE _____
EMAIL _____

PLEASE ACCEPT MY TAX - DEDUCTIBLE GIFT to WAHS: _____